The push to MMW MMICs

The challenge for the MMIC community is to deliver packaged and tested MMW modules that deliver the right performance at the right price. *Commercial Applications for Millimeter-Wave MMICs,* written by Dr Jeff Powell and QinetiQ's Dave Banister, published by Technology Tracking, explores technologies being investigated by researchers, designers and manufacturers to ensure that MMW MMICs achieve the same industry success as their low-frequency counterparts.

Rapid progress over the past five decades has yielded MMICs that are small and cheap enough to form the fundamental building blocks for the revolution in mobile communications. These MMICs are now widely exploited in wireless basestations and handsets, with industry estimating the market to be worth $2bn pa according to Strategy Analytics and others.

Mass-market appeal of wireless communications has commoditised these MMICs, typically operating at 1–2GHz. Manufacturers are under pressure to cut unit prices, while industry demand for microwave components shows signs of declining. MMIC suppliers are seeking new applications that will command higher profit margins and drive future business growth.

Extending MMIC technology to MMW frequencies has emerged as a crucial strategy for device and subsystem manufacturers, since a number of applications exist at high frequencies but only a few products are available commercially.

MMW MMICs, which operate at 20-100GHz with corresponding wavelengths have already been exploited in space and defence, but commercial end-users are now driving demand for low-cost MMIC solutions at frequencies of up to 100GHz.

The report containsl information for decision makers in a diverse range of organisations, including manufacturers/suppliers of microwave and MMW components and subsystems; systems manufacturers exploiting microwave and MMW technology in products; as well as investment houses and public/private funding organisations.

Tying down tantalum purchases upheld

Cabot Corporation has announced it received a favorable ruling from the US District Court granting its motion to dismiss a complaint filed against it by AVX. The complaint alleged that Cabot violated the federal antitrust laws by tying the purchase of one type of tantalum product by AVX to the purchase of other types.

Kennett F. Burnes, Chairman and CEO of Cabot Corp said, "We are pleased to have this matter behind us and look forward to continuing our ongoing relationship with AVX as a valued customer."

Throughout the litigation, AVX has continued to purchase product in accordance with the terms of its supply agreement.

Stratos CEO resigns, revenue update

Stratos International Inc has revised its revenue guidance for its 2Q ended October 2004 and currently expects its 2Q revenue to be some $18m. Previous guidance for the fiscal year 2005 2Q had been in the range of $19.5-21.5m.

The optoelectronic, fiber optic, RF and microwave subsystems and components provider says revenue shortfall primarily resulted from anticipated returns of a specific transceiver sold to one customer.

As a result of certain quality problems experienced with the product, management decided to accept returns and rework the parts to the customer's satisfaction in order to maintain the integrity of Stratos' business and product line. To reduce the risk of a recurrence, Stratos has implemented additional quality screens within its supply chain.

"While we are disappointed with the revenue shortfall, we are confident that we will resolve these issues in a timely manner," said CFO David Slack.

Stratos has also accepted the resignation of its president and CEO, James McGinley as a company officer and director to pursue other interests. His executive duties will be handled by Joe Norwood, Richard Durrant and David Slack, who are executive VPS. McGinley will continue to serve as a consultant to Stratos with respect to matters arising before his resignation.

New starts and VCs shun publicity

A venture capital survey in Silicon Valley seems to show a decline in VC investing, but the reason may be that start-ups are trying to stay concealed or 'under the radar' for longer and not announcing their VC funding as early as before.

In an interview by Matt Marshall appearing on http://www.siliconbeat.com with Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers' John Doerr, Brook Byers and Ray Lane, Doerr says "The entrepreneurs want it that way. Ten years ago, as soon as a venture was funded by a reputable venture capitalist, within six months two or three clone ventures would be launched like heat-seeking missiles right up their tailpipe.

"People got wise to that. Why should we say anything about what we're doing until we have happy customers, and we're ready to try to expand and grow our market? You see many more entrepreneurs wanting to remain in stealth mode for a long, long time. The smart ones, anyway."

Lane also notes that "By talking too early, [start-ups] produce weak competitors. The worst thing you can have is weak competitors. A strong competitor is actually good for you in an early market, because it helps build the market. A weak competitor turns off a client. The client says, "I don't get it," because they're not able to put it across. It's not good for that original idea."

Queried as to whether stealth mode was a disincentive to attracting good employees, Doerr points out that people like joining stealth projects, with Byers adding that most companies come out of stealth with around 100 employees. "And for the first 100, companies know who they want. That's pretty targeted," he adds.